



Beverly H. Rohman

## **SUCCESSFUL WOMEN .... Silently Struggling with ADD**

Do people think of you as organized, successful and someone who has it “all together?” Does the outside world see you as seemingly able to juggle multiple rolls and multi-tasking with grace and ease, while inside you silently struggle to stay focused and work hard to meet deadlines and get it all done? Have recent articles and advertisements about Adult ADD jumped out at you and caused you to pause for thought? Then,, please know that you are not alone. I am one of you. There are a growing number of women of all ages who are finally being heard and finding help.

Most of us are familiar with attentional problems in children - roughly affecting 5 percent of school age children – but you haven’t read much about girls or women with ADD. Until recently, ADD (or AD/HD as it is professionally identified) was considered only a children’s condition. Now, we are finally realizing that adults have ADD, too.

Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD as we’ll use for this article, affects approximately 10 million adults in the United States, of which only about 15 percent are diagnosed and treated. Of that population, about a third are women --- and very few are diagnosed as children. When they were children, many bright and non hyperactive girls were overlooked as having ADD because they managed to get all their work done and do well. Others may have struggled and were less successful, but because they were not hyperactive, their struggles were mistakenly attributed to a lack of intelligence or interest. These young women were underestimated and discouraged from challenging themselves to succeed --- a pattern that followed them into adult life. For all of these women, *they* realized their differences and how hard it was for them to get work done manage every day life ----- efforts that continue to get more difficult with age.

Many girls are finally diagnosed in college, when their organizational skills are stressed and it is hard to function, set priorities and stay focused in the non structured world of college with all its distractions and academic and social challenges. Others manage to find the support and inner strength to graduate and find successful careers, marry and have children. But, the silent, hidden reality of ADD is always there and eventually it can not be overlooked or ignored. And, it should not be overlooked or

ignored --- because it usually is the sign of intelligence, creativity, intuition and sensitivity. Too often the years struggling with chaos and clutter (hidden and exposed), time management, impulsivity, misunderstandings and completing tasks and unrealized dreams are what is noticed and felt. Underneath there is a whole world of strengths and talents that are buried or masked by the issues that can be directly related to ADD.

*Kathleen Nadeau, Ph.D., psychologist and author, says “(A woman) may have AD/HD if you: Have trouble completing projects and jump from one activity to another. Parents and teachers told you that you should have tried harder in school. And are frequently forgetful; have trouble remembering to do the things you intended. Frequently rushing, over-committed, often late. Make impulsive purchases, impulsive decisions. Feel overwhelmed and disorganized in your daily life. Have a disorderly purse, car, closet, household, etc. Are easily distracted from the task you are doing. Go off on tangents in conversations; may tend to interrupt. Have trouble balancing your checkbook; difficulty with paperwork.”*

Having one or two of these traits does not necessarily mean that you have ADD. But, if you can answer yes to many or most of the questions on the list, you may want to consider getting an assessment from a professional very experienced in diagnosing Adult ADD. There is so much help and cause to celebrate when you get informed and proper information. The women that I know who have been diagnosed with ADD are the most exciting, fun, creative and interesting people.

So, don't silently struggle with the challenges of ADD, feeling overwhelmed, frazzled, incomplete or out of order. Instead, know that help is available, knowledge is power and you can find fulfillment, focus and the positive energy to reach for your dreams. Let the journey begin!

*For more information about learning differences and ADD, contact The Learning Connections at 12 West Dover Street, Easton, MD 21601, 410-763-7097, or write to [info@thelearningconnections.net](mailto:info@thelearningconnections.net)*

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